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Causal attributions for crime involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal juvenile offenders

Elke K. Graf
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CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS FOR CRIME INVOLVING ABORIGINAL AND
NON-ABORIGINAL JUVENILE OFFENDERS.

Elke K. Graf BA, Post. Grad Diploma of Psychology (Distinction)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Award of Master of Psychology

at the Faculty of Community Services, Education, and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan
University, Joondalup

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of crime-specific racial stereotypes upon the lay person's judgement about the cause of and appropriate punishment for juvenile crime. A pilot investigation ($n = 30$) revealed that the crimes of motor vehicle theft and possession of an illegal drug were perceived to be more strongly associated with the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offender respectively. This information formed the basis for the type of crime and offender's race experimental manipulations of the main study. Attribution theory variables and the revised version of a previously validated questionnaire (Furnham & Henderson, 1983) were the two approaches to the measurement of cause in the present study. One hundred and eighteen residents from a random sample of suburbs belonging to the City of Wanneroo in Western Australia participated in the study. Consistent with previous research utilising attribution theory, no significant variation in the attributions based on the race of the offender and the type of crime were observed. The expected influence of crime stereotypes upon causal evaluations received little support. Interestingly, differences for all three independent variables were observed with the questionnaire approach to measurement. Further research is needed to clarify the apparent inconsistency in the findings.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(1) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree of diploma in any institution of higher education;

(2) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(3) contain any defamatory material.

Signature:

Date: 10.12.98

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CHAPTER 1

Causal Attributions for Crime Involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
Juvenile Offenders.

The question of what causes a young person to adopt a criminal lifestyle is one which has maintained the interest of both professionals and members of the community for many years (Fowler, Bray, & Hollin, 1992). Considerable research has been conducted in an attempt to understand how the lay person explains the criminal behaviour of both adults and adolescents (Flanagan, 1987). Abrams, Simpson, and Hogg (1987) point out that this topic also draws the attention of politicians who are keen to respond to public opinion. The impact of this latter point is demonstrated by the introduction of the Crime (Serious and Repeat Offenders) Sentencing Act (1992) in Western Australia (Broadhurst & Loh, 1993). The authors argue that this legislation was developed and enacted largely in response to public outrage and calls for more severe penalties after media emphasis upon serious crimes committed by juveniles. There is strong agreement in the literature that significant changes do occur in response to perceived public opinion (Barkan & Cohn, 1994; Campbell & Muncer, 1990).

Little empirical research has been conducted in Australia that specifically examines the lay person's perspective on the cause of crime. Some research however has addressed this question in other countries. Furnham and Henderson (1983) conducted a widely cited study on this topic in the United Kingdom. The research focus was upon investigating the nature and structure of the lay person's explanations for juvenile crime and the development of a questionnaire to quantify such explanations. A pilot study identified thirty statements drawn from both the sociological and psychological literature which were considered representative of the usual explanations for crime. Furnham and Henderson asked

participants to rate these explanations in terms of how important each was in explaining juvenile crime. Factor analysis revealed six distinct dimensions which the authors labelled: defective education, mental instability, temptation, excitement, alienation, and parents. Although all factors were perceived as important, the more societal explanation of defective education which comprised both moral and formal education, was regarded as the most compelling.

Furnham and Henderson (1983) also found that explanations varied according to the demographic characteristics of the respondent. Differential patterns of responding were observed according to an individual's political affiliation, gender, and age. For instance, females viewed the socialisation experience in the home and school as more important in explaining the young person's involvement in crime than did males. Furnham and Henderson conclude that the implicit theories of juvenile crime held by the lay person were complex and multi-dimensional.

One criticism of this study concerns the nature of the task. Participants were asked to explain the general category of "delinquency", without other relevant information such as the nature of the offence or offender. Previous research (Banks, Maloney, & Willcock, 1975; Cann, Calhoun, & Selby, 1980) indicates that an individual's understanding and explanation for crime does vary with the provision of such information. Thus, the impact of crime specific information upon judgements is unclear. Furnham and Henderson acknowledged this limitation of the research.

Hollin and Howells (1987) addressed this concern and extended the survey research of Furnham and Henderson (1983) through a subtle change in methodology. Two experimental studies were conducted which involved a heterogeneous sample of the British public, and a brief, more refined version of the Furnham and Henderson questionnaire. The

questionnaire modification involved reducing the length to 18 items by removing those questions which contributed little in terms of their factor loadings to the respective scales.

The first study investigated the impact of the nature of the offence upon explanations for the criminal behaviour described (Hollin & Howells, 1987). Using a within-subjects design it was predicted that explanations for crime would vary according to the nature of the offence. Hollin and Howells asked 190 participants to read a one sentence description of three crimes: burglary, robbery and sexual assault. Upon completion of this task, participants rated the importance of each questionnaire item on a seven-point scale as an explanation of why a young person commits such crimes.

Consistent with the findings of Furnham and Henderson (1983), all six factors were seen as important, again to varying degrees. As expected, explanations were offence specific. Mental instability and defective education were regarded as important in explaining sexual assault; while the crimes of burglary and robbery were more strongly attributed to socialisation factors (defective education and parental influence). The crime of sexual assault was clearly distinguished from that of robbery and burglary by the importance placed upon the mental instability factor. This scale examines the emotional and mental state of the offender.

Hollin and Howells (1987) further questioned whether the characteristics of an offender, such as race, influenced perceptions of why the person engages in crime. In a second study, the authors examined whether explanations for two violent crimes (robbery, rape) varied according to the race of the offender (White, Asian, West Indian). A between-subjects research design was utilised and participants were presented with more information about the crime in the form of a fabricated newspaper article.

The pattern of results obtained was similar to that in the first study. All six factors were regarded as important in explaining juvenile crime. Defective education was again viewed as highly important in explaining the crimes of robbery and rape. Contrary to prediction however, the race of the offender had little impact on judgements. Hollin and Howells (1987) explained this unexpected finding in terms of participants not having processed the racial cues presented in the vignette. Social desirability in responses was minimised as a plausible explanation because of the use of a between-subjects experimental design. In the absence of a check of the experimental manipulation of race however, it is not possible to conclude from Hollin and Howells study whether race affects explanations..

The studies discussed above of Hollin and Howells (1987) puport to have examined explanations for juvenile crime. However, the choice of the age of 18 years in the second study is problematic if the intention was to investigate perceptions of the juvenile offender. Explanations for the behaviour of a younger juvenile (e.g., 10 years) may be quite different from those provided for an older adolescent (e.g., 18 years). The relevance of the chronological difference in age is highlighted by Western Australian legislation which does not, for example, consider any person under the age of 10 years criminally responsible for their actions (Herlihy & Kenny, 1990). This reflects an understanding of the slow development of the cognitive and social capacity in young persons needed to form criminal intent (Seymour, 1988). Furthermore, the question of whether the offender in the second study was perceived as a juvenile or an adult, given the age of 18 years is in close proximity to the legal status of an adult, is raised.

Both Furnham and Henderson (1983) and Hollin and Howells (1987) demonstrated the utility of the questionnaire as a measure of perceptions of the cause of crime, and showed that the explanations provided by the lay person are complex. Unfortunately, both

studies share two important limitations. The first concerns a potential confound of the manipulated variables with crime seriousness. Feather (1996) argued that the perceived seriousness of an offence influences how a person reacts and evaluates that crime. Hollin and Howells failed to consider whether perceptions of the seriousness of the crimes of burglary, robbery, and sexual assault differed and thus impacted upon the explanations provided. Further, when the information pertaining to a crime is presented in a general and non-specific manner (as in the Furnham & Henderson study), the lay person is most likely to think about what is regarded as the more serious crimes, namely those of a violent nature and involve a repeat offender (Diamond, 1989).

A second concern is that the majority of research examining the lay person's perspective has not been guided by theory. The emphasis thus far has been upon enumerating the various explanations for the cause of crime, and has highlighted a diversity of opinion (Campbell & Muncer, 1990). There has been little attempt however to extend this analysis and use a theoretical framework to examine more specifically the nature of the well documented complexity of the lay person's implicit theories about the cause of juvenile crime.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory has emerged as a popular method for conceptualisation, prediction, and measurement of the cause of adult criminal behaviour (Gordon, 1990, 1993; Macrae & Shepherd, 1989). This theoretical perspective is based on the premise that individuals search for understanding about the cause of their own and another person's behaviour (Antaki, 1982). With such knowledge, perceptions of stability and predicability in the social world are provided (Weary, Stanley, & Harvey, 1989). Weiner (1985) argued

that this search is functional as it aims for a better understanding of the social world to assist with social decision making and the management of an individual's life.

Although numerous variations of attribution theory have been proposed (Douglas & Ogloff, 1996; Weary et al., 1989), there is no one widely accepted theory. However the construct labelled locus of causality is one that is consistently reported among the various approaches (Zebrowitz, 1990). This construct refers to the search for cause through the consideration of those factors in the environment (external) and those within the person (internal) that explain the action or behaviour (Weary et al., 1989).

Although attribution theories were traditionally conceptualised from an interpersonal level, they are applicable to intergroup behaviour. Hewstone (1989) argued that explanations for behaviour can be informed not only by the individual's unique characteristics, but also by their perceived membership in a particular social group. The race of an individual is one example of social group membership that has been shown to influence behavioural judgements (see Gordon, 1990). When viewed from this perspective, attribution theory provides an appropriate framework from which to conceptualise the search for the cause of crime. In simple terms, an individual's involvement in crime serves as the basis for group categorisation. The research participant, it is assumed, is unlikely to regard themselves as a member and thus identify with this particular social group. From this perspective, members of a non-criminal group are evaluating the behaviour of a distinct other group, namely those persons involved in crime.

Hewstone (1990) also stated that stereotypes are an important part of any theory of intergroup attribution. Donovan and Leivers (1993) described stereotypes as beliefs about social groups that function as a cognitive aid to information processing through the simplification of an inherently complex world. Such beliefs assist the individual to impose

meaning upon the environment (Hamilton, Sherman, & Ruvolo, 1990), particularly when presented with minimal or ambiguous information (Bodenhausen, 1988). It is argued that the social group to which the actor and perceiver belong is one basis for stereotypes and can influence causal attributions (Hewstone, 1990). In the context of criminal behaviour, Stalans (1993) argued that specific mental representations labelled “crime stereotypes” are available in memory. A crime stereotype refers to an association between a particular offence and an individual who is regarded as the typical offender. Stalans demonstrated empirically that when minimal details about the situation are provided, crime stereotypes influenced the punishment recommendation. Further research has shown that the race of an offender is one basis for the formation of the association between the individual and particular crimes (Gordon, 1990).

Attribution Research

Empirical research provides support for the utility of attribution theory and stereotypes in the investigation of the cause of criminal behaviour. Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) examined the effects of cultural stereotypes upon evaluations of socially undesirable behaviour, namely crime. It was argued that punishment recommendations for crime would be intricately related to the perceived cause of that behaviour. Further, the perceived cause would likely be influenced by membership in a stereotyped group, particularly when limited information about the event was available (Hamilton et al., 1990).

Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) used the crimes of embezzlement and assault to represent socially undesirable behaviour, and the Anglo-Saxon and Hispanic person to represent two prominent cultural groups in the United States. A control group in which the cultural background of the individual was not obvious was also used. The choice of crimes was based on the assumption, and later supported through manipulation checks, that the

crime of embezzlement was perceived to be more likely committed by an Anglo-Saxon person; while assault was more strongly linked to the Hispanic offender. It was argued that the strong association between a particular crime and cultural group served as a measure of a crime stereotype. Bodenhausen and Wyer predicted that offences consistent with the crime stereotype would be perceived as more likely to recur, more stable, and receive harsher punishment.

Participants assumed the role of a parole board member and were asked to evaluate on a 10-point scale the likelihood that the incarcerated person would (1) commit another crime upon release and (2) remain a menace to society. Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) considered these two questions as measures of the concept of stability. Due to the high correlation between these indices, the scores were aggregated to form a single stability measure. As predicted, stereotypic expectations influenced judgements of the criminal transgression. When the behaviour of the target person was consistent with the crime stereotype, the problem behaviour was evaluated as more stable, more likely to recur, and was dealt with more severely. Harsher punishments were recommended for stereotypic behaviours. Less severe punishment and a lesser degree of stability was found in situations where the information was inconsistent or when no stereotype was activated.

Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) conclude that attributions to a “stable dispositional factor” (p. 279) were provided when the transgression was consistent with the stereotype held about the nature of the offence and the race of the offender. Situational factors were used as an explanation for behaviour that was inconsistent with stereotypic expectations. This study supports the view that stereotypes have a pervasive impact upon behavioural evaluations. Judgements about behaviour were not made exclusively upon the actual data

presented in the situation. Personal theories held by the perceiver about the cause of behaviour and the likely actor impacted on judgements.

Macrae and Shepherd (1989) critiqued the conclusions of Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) and note that the measure used to capture the participants attribution for causality is problematic. It was argued that Bodenhausen and Wyer did not make reference to attribution theory in the introduction nor operationalisation of the construct of stability, yet drew conclusions couched in attribution terms. Macrae and Shepherd asserted that simply asking for ratings about the likelihood that the behaviour will continue after release from custody confuses the attribution dimensions of dispositional (or internal) and stability. Stating the belief that the crime will recur may in fact reflect the participants understanding and appreciation of the often pervasive nature of social pressures acting upon the person, which suggests more of an external attribution. Furthermore, the study failed to differentiate and measure the more environmental (external) demands on behaviour. Thus, Macrae and Shepherd (1989) highlighted the need for a conceptually clear and explicit measure of attribution constructs.

To address these concerns, a conceptual replication with an improved measure of the internal (dispositional) and external attribution dimension was conducted (Macrae & Shepherd, 1989). An 11-point bipolar scale specifically assessing the causal attribution was used, with the respective anchors of “entirely due to personal character” and “entirely due to external pressures”. To test the robustness of the impact of stereotypes upon behavioural evaluations, occupational stereotypes were used. Previous pilot studies indicate that the crime of assault was perceived as typical of males in labouring occupations, while accountants were more likely to be involved in embezzlement offences. Further, situations of a labourer involved in embezzlement and an accountant involved in assault were

considered atypical. Thus, the crimes of embezzlement and assault, and occupations of labourer and accountant were the experimental manipulations. One hundred and twenty students were presented with case information about a defendant's plea of guilty and were asked to evaluate the seriousness and the cause of the incident.

Despite the methodological changes, the results of the study were consistent with those obtained by Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985). Overall, internal causes of behaviour tended to be nominated when the crime was consistent with occupational stereotypes, while external attributions were provided for behaviours incompatible with stereotypes (Macrae & Shepherd, 1989). No main effects for occupation nor type of crime was found for the causal attribution measure. Interestingly, the authors noted a tendency for ratings of causality to be toward the mid-point of the bipolar attribution scale. The cause of the criminal behaviour was rarely attributed entirely to either personal factors or situational pressures. Based on this observation, Macrae and Shepherd commented that perhaps it is more accurate to conclude that external attributions are made less for behaviours consistent with stereotypes than stereotype-unrelated behaviours. This observation supports claims made in the attribution literature about the conceptual difficulty of assuming that the internal and external attributions are mutually exclusive and hence best measured on the single scale distinction of internal and external causes (Hewstone, 1990; Miller, Smith, & Uleman, 1981).

The research of Carrol and Payne (1977) adopted a broader focus through a consideration of the perceived stability of the cause in conjunction with the locus dimension (internal/external) of attribution theory. It was found that when the cause was regarded as internal and stable, a more severe prison sentence was recommended. Carrol and Payne concluded that the judgement of the lay person is informed by evaluations on both the locus

and stability of the cause. The stability dimensions seemed particularly influential for the evaluation of recidivism.

Research in the context of simulated jury decision making has further demonstrated the impact of stereotypes upon evaluations of criminal behaviour. Gordon (1990) utilised attribution theory to further investigate the effect of racial stereotypes upon the perceived cause of crime and recommendations for punishment for adult criminal behaviour. It was predicted that offenders engaged in crimes consistent with the prevalent stereotype would receive a longer (more severe) sentence and the cause of the behaviour would be attributed to internal factors. Based on the research of Gordon, Bindrim, McNicholas, and Walden (1988), the crimes of embezzlement and burglary, and a White and Black offender were utilised for the study. Gordon et al. (1988) used data from crime reports detailing arrest rates for various crimes by offender race to suggest that blue-collar crimes are associated with Black offenders, while White offenders are more strongly linked with white-collar crimes. A pilot study confirmed and extended this relationship, with students nominating the crime of burglary as blue-collar, and embezzlement as a white-collar crime (Gordon).

In the main study, Gordon (1990) used a between-subjects design and 96 students assumed the role of juror who were presented with one of four fictitious crime scenarios modelled after newspaper reports. The scenarios were kept brief and described either the crime of burglary or embezzlement being committed by either a Black or White defendant. A direct measure of the attribution concepts was utilised as participants were asked to indicate on a 9-point bipolar scale the extent to which they perceived that the cause of the crime resides in factors totally internal or external to the offender. Participants were also asked to nominate the amount of time the offender should spend in custody. This served as a measurement of the severity of the punishment.

No main effects for either the race of the defendant or type of crime was found according to the attribution measure. As predicted however, a significant interaction between these two variables on the causal attribution measure was found. For the Black defendant, internal attributions were provided for race stereotypic crimes. Unexpected results for the punishment measures were found and highlighted the importance of considering the demographic characteristics of the research sample. When the race of the research participant was Black, both the Black and White defendant received significantly longer prison sentences. Gordon (1990) speculated that this result may have reflected a desire by participants to be seen as having a particularly strong attitude toward crime. It is also reflective of the current situation in the literature whereby demographic characteristics of the research participant, such as age, gender, and race have been shown to influence results for both the theory (Abrams et al., 1987; Gordon et al., 1988; Gordon, 1990; Gordon, 1993) and less theory driven research (Furnham & Henderson, 1983; Hollin & Howells, 1987). At this time however, the literature is characterised by inconsistent findings about the nature of this effect (Banks, Maloney, & Willcock, 1975; Furnham & Henderson, 1983; Hollin & Howells, 1987).

Summary

The two approaches to the assessment of the cause of crime just described both offer valuable information and highlight the complex nature of such evaluations. It has been shown using the questionnaire developed by Furnham and Henderson (1983) that members of the community offer a diversity of explanations for crime and consider not only the individual but also the more societal factors which may contribute to the offending behaviour. The experimental analysis based on attribution theory has demonstrated an integral relationship between crime stereotypes and intergroup casual attributions. Overall,

attribution theory provides a sound theoretical basis upon which to frame questions about the cause of juvenile crime.

Methodological Limitations of Attribution Research

Miller et al. (1981) presented two important criticisms of the traditional approach to the measurement of the internal and external attribution constructs. It was highlighted that there is little convergence between findings using different methods of assessing these constructs. Miller et al. argued that this discrepancy suggests that the understanding and interpretation of the internal and external constructs by the lay person may not be as theorists expected. Miller et al. (1981) also observed that the internal and external dimensions as typically measured are quite broad categories, and may confound other areas of theoretical interest. For instance, Carrol and Payne (1977) and Macrae and Shepherd (1989) identified the stability of the perceived cause as one example of the possible conceptual overlap. A second limitation regards the assumed inverse relationship between the internal and external constructs. Research has failed to find the expected negative relationship, thus questioning the adequacy of the traditional bipolar scale as the method of measurement.

An alternative method of measurement provided by Abrams et al. (1987) responds to these criticisms. In an investigation of the adolescent perspective on juvenile crime, Abrams et al. conceptualised the simplified and shortened questionnaire of Furnham and Henderson (1983) according to attribution theory. An a priori classification of the questionnaire items according to the internal and external dimensions was conducted. The resulting classification was checked and agreed upon by four non-psychologists. The study of Abrams et al. (1987) tested and demonstrated the utility of this classification. Significant differences

in the preference for the internal and external attribution as an explanation for delinquency according to the residential location of the respondent (rural or urban) was observed.

In addition, the more comprehensive approach to the conceptualisation of causal attributions proposed by Weiner (1986) would address the above mentioned concerns. Weiner argued that the structure of perceived cause of an event consisted of three dimensions: locus of causality, stability, and controllability. When the identified cause of an event is believed to be due to something within the actor (internal) or alternatively, outside of the person (external), Weiner has labelled this dimension as locus of causality. This dimension is congruent with the conceptualisation of internal-external attribution typical of the majority of studies reviewed. The stability dimension distinguishes between whether the perceived cause of an event is seen as permanent or transient (Xenikou, Furnham, & McCarrey, 1997). Finally, whether the cause is seen as something that can be controlled (either by the actor or another person) is captured by the final dimension of controllability. Although there is some disagreement among theorists about what constitutes the most relevant causal dimensions (Grove & Prapavessis, 1995), Weiner asserts that this model has received considerable empirical support. It has been shown to be reliable and applicable across a variety of situations.

Using this model, a more sophisticated comparison and description of the cause of an event is possible (Weiner, 1986). This broader theoretical perspective would allow unambiguous conclusions to be drawn about an individual's beliefs' about the cause of crime. Unfortunately, research within the criminal behaviour field has yet to adopt this model. Predictions based on the locus and stability dimensions can be drawn from the results of previous studies, but information about the controllability dimension is not directly

available. Research in a similar area provides a basis for predictions involving the controllability dimension.

Evidence for an intergroup attribution bias using the Weiner (1986) model has been demonstrated in the research of Islam and Hewstone (1993) in the context of evaluations of minority and majority group members. Essentially, members of the majority (or in-group) regarded the cause of the negative behaviour of the minority (or out-group) as internal, stable, and controllable. This pattern of response, it is argued, serves to favour in-group members. Although this study was not within the context of criminal behaviour, it is arguably similar to the task a person engages in when evaluating the cause of crime. At the group level, a member of the in-group or majority group (the lay person) is making an evaluation of a negative behaviour involving a minority group member (i.e., an individual involved in crime).

Lay Perspective and the Aboriginal Australian

Although there exists a substantial research base which suggests a link between crime stereotypes, causal attributions, and punishment recommendations, minimal interest has been given to examining the lay person's perspective on the cause of crime in Australia. This is surprising for several reasons. Firstly, it has been well documented that legislative change specific to the sentencing of the juvenile offender in Western Australia has occurred in response to perceived public demand (Broadhurst & Loh, 1993; Sidoti, 1992). Secondly, there exists a well documented difference between the involvement of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian throughout all stages in the criminal justice process (Aboriginal Affairs Department [AAD], 1995). The over-representation of the Aboriginal Australian in both the juvenile and adult system has been a consistent feature across time (Beresford &

Omaji, 1995), and Hazlehurst and Dunn (1988) point out that this feature of criminal justice system does not go unnoticed by the public.

A related point concerns the media's approach to crime and the Aboriginal in Australia. Sercombe (1995) argued that the media is an important source of information for the public, and Plater (1992) noted that it is common media practice to identify the Aboriginality of the alleged offender. To demonstrate this point, Sercombe (1995) examined the social construction of crime by the media through an analysis of a selection of articles from a major newspaper in Western Australia across a two-year period. Findings indicated that the media presents the Aboriginal person as a threat to law and order in society and the public learns to expect that crime is a usual behaviour for the Aboriginal person. Roberts and Gebotys (1989) argue that the media and the biased presentation of crime plays an important role in such misperception and this has important consequences for how the lay person perceives the cause of crime and the purpose of sentencing.

Given the recent legislative response to the lay person's demands for change in Western Australia combined with the continual racial disparity in prisons (Beresford & Omaji, 1996), it seems relevant to examine the lay person's perception regarding the cause of juvenile crime. Particular attention to the racial issue seems important as Augoustinos, Ahrens, and Innes (1994) have shown that racial stereotypes about an Aboriginal person are not uncommon in Australian society. Augoustinos et al. (1994) asked members of the community to provide their ideas about the "cultural stereotype of Australian Aborigines" (p. 127) as viewed by most people. The three categories of alcohol use, "bludgers", and lazy were frequently mentioned. The category labelled criminal was also raised by participants, though less often. Augoustinos et al. (1994) concluded that these results were consistent with previous research which has demonstrated that the majority of participants were

familiar with stereotypes of the Aboriginal Australian and that these were typically negative in nature.

Although it has been shown that members of the Australian community possess general stereotypes about the indigenous population, no attempt has been made to examine whether more crime-specific stereotypes based upon race are a feature of the lay person's thinking. Furthermore, the impact of such a perception upon an individual's understanding about the cause of crime and perception of appropriate punishment is unclear.

Current Research

The purpose of the present study was to use attribution theory to investigate the lay person's perspective on the cause of juvenile crime. This seemed relevant given the argument that the community perspective has had a notable impact upon the direction of legal policy governing the juvenile offender (Broadhurst & Loh, 1993), yet minimal research has specifically addressed this issue from the Australian perspective. Of particular interest was determining whether the racial characteristics of the offender, nature of the crime, and crime-specific racial stereotypes influenced judgements about the cause of the crime and preferred punishment for the offence.

The design of the study was a response to the limitations of earlier investigations of the perceived cause of crime. There is some evidence that the attribution model proposed by Weiner (1986) provides a more comprehensive analysis of perceived causality through the explicit identification of three underlying properties, namely locus, stability, and controllability. In addition, the modified version of the Furnham and Henderson (1983) questionnaire proposed by Hollin and Howells (1987) provides an alternative method of measurement for the locus dimension and more detailed information regarding the perception of juvenile crime. Both techniques share the similar goal of documenting

perceived causality. Integration of the modified Hollin and Howells questionnaire in the present study, is an attempt to expand upon information gained through an attributional analysis.

The present research consisted of a pilot and main study. The pilot study utilised a within-subjects design to determine (1) the nature of stereotypic beliefs about the crimes typically associated with the Aboriginal and Caucasian offender, and (2) the perceived seriousness of the offences described. The aim was to identify two crimes, one more strongly associated with the Aboriginal offender the other with the Caucasian offender, which did not differ substantially in terms of perceptions of seriousness. The resulting two crimes would form the basis for manipulations in the main study, and thus the construction of vignettes.

The main study utilised a between-subjects design, with the race of the offender and type of crime serving as the two independent variables. The three dimensions of locus, stability, and controllability were the dependent variables and represented a direct approach to the measurement of these attribution constructs. The questionnaire proposed by Hollin and Howells (1987) was used to provide an alternative measure of the locus dimension.

One focus of the main study is to investigate the effect that information about the offender's race and type of crime has upon causal attributions and punishment recommendations. Given that the examination of causality has not been approached using the more comprehensive model of Weiner (1986) and the inconsistency in findings of previous research, specific predictions of main effects are not made.

A significant interaction between the type of crime and offender's race on the attribution measure is expected. Specifically, when the Aboriginal and Caucasian Australian are involved in offences consistent with the crime stereotype the cause would be attributed

to internal, stable, and controllable factors. More severe punishment recommendations are expected in this circumstance. Attributions to the external, unstable, and uncontrollable dimensions are predicted for offence and offender combinations which are not consistent with the crime stereotype. Recommendations for punishment are expected to be less severe when presented with information inconsistent with the crime stereotype.

Two additional analysis were conducted. The first aims to investigate whether the two methods for measuring the attribution dimension of locus are in agreement. The second analysis will examine whether the commonly held explanations for juvenile crime provided by the questionnaire (defective education, mentally unstable, temptation, excitement, alienation, parents) will vary according to the crime stereotypes. Empirical evidence does not yet permit specific predictions on this later point to be made. It is anticipated however, that different explanations as a function of crime-stereotypes will result.

CHAPTER 2

Pilot Study

The author was unable to locate research in the Australian context focusing on crime-specific racial stereotypes relating to the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offender. A small survey was conducted to elicit the stereotypic beliefs about those crimes considered more likely to involve each racial group. The aim was to identify two crimes, one more strongly associated with the Aboriginal offender, the other more strongly linked to the Caucasian offender. One further aim was that the identified crimes did not differ substantially in terms of perceived seriousness. The resulting two crimes would form the basis for the experimental manipulations of the main study.

Method

Participants. Of the 54 adults invited to participate in the study, 30 (18 females and 12 males) agreed and resulted in a 56% response rate. Only persons aged 18 years and over were accepted into the study as previous research suggested that explanations for crime differ markedly between adults and adolescents (see Abrams et al., 1987). Eighty percent of the participants were recruited from a major metropolitan train station in Perth, Western Australia. The remaining 20% were recruited from their residential address in the same locality. Ages ranged from 18 to 69 years ($M = 31$ years; $SD = 14.67$), and all persons that agreed to participate completed the survey.

Materials. The survey contained three sections: crime definitions, perceptions of racial stereotypes, and perceptions of crime seriousness. The first section provided participants with a brief definition (no longer than 23 words) of 17 offences. The choice of particular crimes was based on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody report which outlined the involvement of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth in the

Juvenile Justice System in Western Australia (Broadhurst, Ferrante, Loh, Reidpath, & Harding, 1994). According to this report, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth were charged in 1993 for offences broadly categorised as: against the person, against property, good order, drugs, driving and motor vehicle. As the report did not detail the specific crimes covered by these general categories, the Criminal Code Act 1913 (WA); Misuse of Drugs Act 1981 (WA); and Road Traffic Act 1974 (WA) were used to identify and define 17 specific crimes considered representative of these categories. Each offence description was a simplified version of the legal definition contained in respective legislation, and the following offences selected were: driving while intoxicated, possession of an illegal drug, sexual penetration without consent, fraud, disorderly conduct, murder, firearms violation, driving without a licence, vandalism, unlawful operation of a computer system, arson, manufacture and trafficking of an illegal drug, break and enter, assault, motor vehicle theft, dangerous driving, and robbery. The order in which the crimes were presented to the participant was random. Appendix A presents the offence descriptions.

The second section aimed to elicit beliefs about the race of the typical offender for each crime (crime-specific racial stereotypes), as previous research suggested that certain offences were seen as more typical of a particular racial group (see Gordon et al., 1988). To avoid ‘sensitising’ the participants to the relevance of the offender’s race to the study, the label non-Aboriginal was avoided. Instead, reference to a Caucasian offender was utilised throughout the research project. Participants were asked to think about all male juvenile offenders aged 15 years old, and then nominate the percentage of Aboriginal (and Caucasian) offenders who commit each particular offence. The chronological age of 15 years was chosen in an attempt to emphasise that the behaviour under investigation was that of an adolescent, who has not yet achieved the cognitive and psychological maturity of that of an adult but has progressed from that typical of a child. Ten response categories ranging

from 0 - 100%, each increasing by 10% (eg., 0-10%; 10-20%) were provided. Because of the within-subjects design, participants rated the 17 crimes consecutively for one racial group, and then immediately proceeded to repeat the task for the remaining race. The order of these racial evaluations was counterbalanced.

The final section was an assessment of the perceived seriousness of each crime. On a 7-point scale with the anchors 'not at all serious' (1) and 'extremely serious' (7), participants nominated the seriousness of each crime when the offender was a 15 year old male. No reference to the race of the offender was made. Appendix B contains a copy of all dependent measures used in the pilot investigation.

In an attempt to counterbalance the order of evaluations relating to crime seriousness and the offender's race, four versions of the instrument were developed. Fifteen questionnaires required evaluations of the offender followed by the seriousness of the crime, while the reverse order applied to the remaining questionnaires. For the evaluation of the typical offender task, the race was also counterbalanced. Half of the participants evaluated the Caucasian followed by the Aboriginal offender, while the remainder received the reverse order.

Procedure. Participants were randomly supplied with one of the four survey versions. Across all versions, the first task required participants to read brief crime descriptions, which could be referred back to at any time. The next task involved ratings of offence seriousness and the typical offender, the order depending upon which counterbalanced version was received. Finally, basic demographic details, such as age, gender, and occupation was requested.

Across a two week period in April 1997, potential participants were approached between 10.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. on weekends. All individuals waiting for the transport

were approached. A standardised introduction and set of instructions were provided, and adults were asked to participate in a survey on juvenile crime in Western Australia.

Participants were informed that the survey would take approximately 15 minutes, and that there were no time constraints for completion. The experimenter waited to collect each survey, and upon completion, answers to any questions were provided and all participants were thanked for their involvement.

Results

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was utilised, as assumption testing using SPSS for Windows indicated that normality assumption was violated across many evaluations of crime seriousness and the offenders' race. Histograms indicated considerable negative skewness which was confirmed by the various Shapiro-Wilks statistics. Participants' rankings of the percentage of Aboriginal and Caucasian offenders associated with each crime was compared, and a stringent alpha of 0.01 was adopted. Significant differences were observed for ten crimes: break and enter, dangerous driving, disorderly conduct, fraud, manufacture of an illegal drug, motor vehicle theft, driving without a licence, possession of an illegal drug, unlawful operation of a computer, and vandalism. The median rank for the crimes of fraud, unlawful operation of a computer system, manufacture of an illegal drug, and possession of an illegal drug was significantly higher for the Caucasian offender. The remaining crimes were more strongly associated with an Aboriginal offender (see Table 1).

Table 1

Crimes Significantly Associated with the Race of the Offender

	Aboriginal Offender		Caucasian Offender		<u>z</u>
	<u>Mdn</u>	Range	<u>Mdn</u>	Range	
Possession of an Illegal Drug*	4	7	5.5	7	-2.74
Fraud*	2	7	4	8	-2.70
Unlawful Operation of a Computer*	2	4	5	8	-3.91
Manufacture of an Illegal Drug*	2.5	7	6	8	-3.92
Motor Vehicle Theft	7	8	4	8	-3.35
Break and Enter	7	7	4.5	8	-2.74
Dangerous Driving	6	8	4	8	-2.57
Disorderly Conduct	7	7	4	7	-3.19
Driving Without a Licence	6.5	9	4	8	-3.44
Vandalism	6	9	5	7	-2.66

* Median value significantly higher for the Caucasian offender.

Note: All of the z statistics reported are significant ($p < .01$)

The seriousness of each of four crimes more strongly associated with the Caucasian offender (fraud, unlawful operation of a computer system, manufacture of an illegal drug,

and possession of an illegal drug) were compared with each of the remaining six crimes linked with the Aboriginal offender using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. In total, 24 comparisons were conducted to identify two crime pairs, involving an Aboriginal and Caucasian offender, which did not achieve statistical significance. Based on the preference to be over exclusive rather than over inclusive in this circumstance, an alpha of .10 was adopted. No significant differences were observed for seven crime combinations presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of Crime Seriousness Ratings

Comparison Crimes			
Aboriginal Offence	Caucasian Offence	<u>z</u>	<u>p</u>
Motor Vehicle Theft	Possession of an Illegal Drug	-.26	.7982
Motor Vehicle Theft	Fraud	-1.12	.2627
Vandalism	Possession of an Illegal Drug	-1.26	.2060
Vandalism	Fraud	-.65	.5132
Driving without a Licence	Possession of an Illegal Drug	-.50	.6143
Driving without a Licence	Fraud	-.20	.8401
Disorderly Conduct	Unlawful Operation of a Computer	-1.30	.1924

p > .01

Discussion

The pilot study revealed that of the 17 crimes under investigation, Aboriginal Australians were viewed as the more likely offender for 13 of the offences, including crimes against property, good order, driving and motor vehicle. Caucasian adolescents were

perceived as more likely to be involved in drug related offences and the more white-collar crimes. Specifically, the crime of fraud, unlawful operation of a computer system, manufacture of an illegal drug, and possession of an illegal drug were perceived as more typical for the Caucasian offender. This pattern of findings is consistent with published crime statistics from which Broadhurst et al. (1994) concluded that a higher proportion of non-Aboriginal offenders are charged with fraud and drug related offences. In contrast, Aboriginal offenders were charged at a disproportionate rate for motor vehicle and good order offences.

To eliminate the potential confounding effect of the perceived seriousness of the offences, further investigation of the initial 17 crimes identified a smaller subset of seven crimes that were perceived as equitable in terms of seriousness. For instance, participants reported that the crimes of motor vehicle theft and fraud were of similar seriousness, as were the crimes of vandalism and fraud. The offence of manufacture of illegal drugs, which was more strongly associated with the Caucasian offender, was seen as more serious than all other crimes involving the Aboriginal offender that it was compared to. On this basis the crime of manufacture and trafficking of an illegal drug was eliminated from consideration for inclusion in the main study.

Seven pairs of crimes which varied according to the race of the likely offender that were also equitable in terms of perceived seriousness were identified as possible manipulations in the main study. Specifically, the following Caucasian then Aboriginal crime pairs were identified: possession of an illegal drug and motor vehicle theft; possession of an illegal drug and vandalism; possession of an illegal drug and driving without a licence; fraud and driving without a licence; fraud and vandalism; fraud and motor vehicle theft; and unlawful operation of a computer and disorderly conduct.

The crimes of possession of an illegal drug and motor vehicle theft were chosen for the main study to represent offences that the participant perceived as more typical of the Caucasian and Aboriginal offender respectively. These crimes were chosen to achieve congruence between official crime statistics and the lay person's perception. Perusal of recent crime arrest statistics indicated that comparatively, juveniles appear to be more likely to be involved in drug related offences than fraud and unlawful operation of a computer system (Aboriginal Affairs Department [AAD], 1995). Broadhurst, Ferrante, and Susilo (1991) report that for the offence of fraud, only a comparatively small number of distinct persons, irrespective of race, faced the Court in 1991. Bearing in mind the limitations of judicial statistics, this pattern suggests that fraud and unlawful operation of a computer are not representative of the actual criminal activities of an adolescent, regardless of the offender's race.

The elimination of the vandalism offence was made on statistical grounds. Essentially, the difference between the median rank for the Aboriginal and Caucasian offender for this crime was quite small, suggesting little discriminative power. The crime of driving with no licence was rejected on more practical grounds. All 15 year old persons caught driving a motor vehicle would be breaking the law and thus from the legal perspective, there would be little grounds for differentiation between the offenders based on race. Based on this reasoning, the crimes of motor vehicle theft and possession of an illegal drug were chosen for the main study.

CHAPTER 3

Main Study

The purpose of the main study was to determine beliefs about the cause of, and most appropriate punishment for, crimes involving an Aboriginal and Caucasian offender. The influence of crime-specific racial stereotypes upon these judgements was of particular interest. A more comprehensive assessment of the perceived cause of crime was undertaken through the use of the locus, stability, and controllability dimensions of attribution theory. In addition, an alternative less direct approach to the measurement of the locus dimension, available with the questionnaire proposed by Hollin and Howells (1987), was undertaken. This allowed not only a comparison between the different methods of assessing the attribution constructs but also provided a broader perspective to the measurement of causality.

One focus of the study was to investigate the causal attributions and punishment recommendations for (1) crime involving the Caucasian and Aboriginal Australian, and (2) the specific offences of motor vehicle theft and possession of heroin. Hypotheses related to these two independent variables are not made given the inconsistency in findings of earlier studies.

It was hypothesised that more severe punishment and attributions to an internal, stable, and controllable cause would be found for offences consistent with the crime stereotype. Specifically, this pattern of attributions is expected for the Caucasian offender involved in the crime of possession of heroin, and the Aboriginal offender involved in motor vehicle theft. The converse pattern of attributions (external, unstable, and uncontrollable) and less severe punishment recommendations were expected for offence and offender combinations which did not match the crime stereotype (ie., Aboriginal person and possession of heroin; Caucasian offender and motor vehicle theft).

Of interest also was determining whether evaluations of the importance of the various scales of the questionnaire (parents, defective education, temptation, alienation, mental instability, and excitement) in explaining the cause of crime differed according to crime stereotypes. Specific predictions on this issue are difficult as little research was available.

Method

Participants. Residential addresses in the City of Wanneroo in Western Australia were approached to assess the perception of the general population. A random sample of 10 suburbs (5% of the total) in this target area were selected. Within each suburb, one street was randomly selected as the starting point for administering the questionnaires. When the occupant of the home responded, regardless of whether or not they agreed to participate in the study, every third residence was approached. When there was no answer, the house immediately next door was approached, and this continued until the occupant replied. Once this occurred, approaching every third house resumed. Both sides of a street were included in the sampling. A maximum of 13 questionnaires were to be administered per suburb, with only one questionnaire per house. As in the pilot study, only adults (persons over the age of 18 years) were invited to participate.

214 residences were approached and 120 adults (56%) agreed to participate. In total, 118 questionnaires were returned. However one was excluded as less than one half of the survey was completed. The final sample consisted of 70 females and 47 males, of varying ages from 18 to 70 years ($M = 34$ years; $SD = 12.10$) and education levels (ranging from completion of some secondary schooling to advanced tertiary studies).

Materials. Four brief crime descriptions were developed which systematically varied the nature of the crime (motor vehicle theft, possession of heroin) and the offenders' race (Aboriginal Australian named Nyaparu Kickett, Caucasian Australian named Hal Smith).

The crime descriptions were modelled after newspaper articles (see Appendix C). To provide a realistic representation of media coverage of the offence 'possession of an illegal drug' that was used in the pilot study, a slight change was made. As this definition is a legal term and quite general, reference to the phrase 'an illegal drug' was replaced with 'possession of heroin'. The reference to the specific drug ensured consistency among the participant's evaluation of the nature of the offence.

In all vignettes, the race of the offender and their name was presented in the first sentence. From that point onwards, all reference to the offender was through a direct quotation of their name. This was an attempt to provide subtle reminders of the individuals' race. The crimes presented in the vignettes were kept brief (no longer than 156 words), as similar as possible in terms of the crime description, and left no reasonable doubt concerning the individual's involvement in the offence. Two of the vignettes presented crime situations consistent with the stereotypic expectation (Aboriginal offender and motor vehicle theft; Caucasian offender and possession of heroin). The remaining two presented the opposite offence and offenders' race combinations, and thus produced situations which were inconsistent with stereotypes.

Two vignettes are presented to provide general information pertaining to how the variables were operationalised and presented to participants. The crime of motor vehicle theft committed by an Aboriginal Australian read as follows:

In Perth District Court today, a 15 year old Aboriginal male was found guilty of the crime of Motor Vehicle Theft after a two day trial. Nyaparu Kickett, of Dallington Street, Balga initially denied the charge. The Court heard that on the early evening of 14 July, Nyaparu Kickett used a screw driver to open the passenger door of a red Toyota Corolla and drove away from the car park of the Perth Entertainment Center. Police officials report that it is not uncommon for

young persons to steal cars when bands were playing at this venue. Help from members of the Noongar community was valuable in bringing the youth to justice.

Justice James Waters, in his summing up, declared that all the evidence pointed clearly to Nyaparu Kickett having committed the crime of Motor Vehicle Theft.

The youth was remanded on bail for sentencing next week.

For the Caucasian offender involved in the crime of motor vehicle theft, the differences in the vignette were (1) a change in the offenders name to suggest the race (from Nyaparu Kickett to Hal Smith), (2) the race label (from Aboriginal to Caucasian), and (3) the reference to help from the 'Noongar community' was changed to members of the 'local community'. All changes aimed to make subtle reference to the offenders race throughout the article. The crime of possession of heroin committed by a Caucasian read as follows:

In Perth District Court today, a 15 year old Caucasian male was found guilty of the crime of Possession of Heroin after a two day trial. Hal Smith of Dallington St, Balga initially denied the charge. The Court heard that on the early evening of 14 July, Hal Smith was seen with a syringe in the car park of Perth's Entertainment Centre. Police were called to the scene and found a small package containing heroin behind a lamp post in the car park. They reported that it is not uncommon to find youths with illegal drugs in their possession when bands were playing at this venue. Help from members of the local community was valuable in bringing the youth to justice. Justice James Waters, in his summing up, declared that all the evidence pointed clearly to Hal Smith having committed the crime of Possession of Heroin. The youth was remanded on bail for sentencing next week.

Again, similar changes were made to references of the offenders' race when describing the Aboriginal offender and offence of possession of heroin. The offenders name, race, and reference to community assistance were the same as those presented for the

Aboriginal offender involved in motor vehicle theft (Appendix C contains all four fabricated newspaper articles).

Dependent Measures

The four dimensions of causality (internal, external, stable, and controllable) were each assessed on a 7-point scale. For the internal and external dimensions, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statement that the offender broke the law ‘because of his personal character (internal pressures)’, and ‘because of pressures from the environment in which he lives (external pressures)’. Both scales ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7). Perceptions of the extent to which the cause of the offence was regarded as ‘stable (constant) over time’ was measured on a scale which ranged from completely stable (1) to completely unstable (7). The scale which examined the extent of control over the criminal behaviour ranged from completely controllable (1) to completely uncontrollable (7).

The modified version of the Furnham and Henderson (1983, see Hollin & Howells, 1987) questionnaire which evaluated the lay persons explanations for juvenile crime was also utilised. The original version which consisted of 30 items and accounted for 47.95% of the variance was reduced to a total of 18 items by selecting for each of the six factors, the three highest loading items. The six distinct factors labelled: defective education, mentally unstable, temptation, excitement, alienation, and parents, were maintained. The statement “they enjoy the excitement and kicks when breaking the law” is an example of one item used as a measure on excitement scale (Appendix D contains the complete questionnaire).

Participants were asked “how important do you judge each statement in explaining why offenders like Hal Smith (Nyaparu Kickett) commit the crime of possession of heroin (motor vehicle theft)”. The importance of each statement was rated on a 7-point scale,

ranging from highly important (1) to highly unimportant (7). The sum of the three items for each scale provided a composite score, with the highest scores indicating less importance.

Perceptions of the appropriate punishment for the offence presented in the vignette was elicited through two questions, and reflect realistic options available to the relevant legal authority (e.g., Magistrate). Firstly, participants nominated whether a custodial or non-custodial option was seen as the most appropriate response to the crime depicted in the vignette. Further detail about the preferred type of punishment was then required. An ordinal ranking for the custodial option was provided. Sixteen options, ranging from less than 1 month to more than 7 years in custody, were available. For the non-custodial option, a scale ranging from 'no punishment and no conviction', through to fines of varying monetary value, and finally to community based orders involving a varying degree of community service hours, was provided. This scale was an attempt to provide a ranking of possible penalties available to the sentencing authority which ranged from a minimum to maximum. Appendix E provides contains all dependent measures.

Procedure. Prospective participants were approached between 10.00 am and 3.00 p.m. on both weekdays and weekends during the month of June 1997, and surveys were randomly distributed. As questions relating to race was likely to be a 'sensitive' issue (Hollin & Howells, 1987), a between-subjects design was employed to reduce awareness of the experimental manipulations. All questionnaires required participants to read the newspaper article provided and then record their opinion regarding the cause of the crime described. Immediately following this, evaluations of the four causal dimensions, the questionnaire, and punishment recommendations were undertaken. Finally, participants were asked to provide basic demographic details. Similar instructions and concluding comments as those presented in the pilot study were utilised. Again, there was no time restrictions upon involvement in the study, and questionnaires were collected immediately

upon completion. It was at this time that participants were informed that the articles were fabricated and the rationale for this deception explained.

Results

Three main statistical analyses were conducted. The first analysis examined causal attributions for the offences of motor vehicle theft and possession of heroin which involved an Aboriginal and Caucasian person. Using SPSS for Windows, a 2 X 2 between subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the four dependent variables: internal, external, stable, and controllable. The race of offender and type of crime were the independent variables.

Data screening revealed that several assumptions of the MANOVA were violated, and the necessary adjustments were made. According to the Shapiro-Wilks statistic, the assumption of normality was tenable for three of the 16 combinations of the offenders' race and type of crime: the Aboriginal offender involved in the crime of possession of heroin assessed on the controllable and stable variables, and the Aboriginal offender and the crime of motor vehicle theft on the stable variable. However, Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) state that a cell size of 20 or more is sufficient to ensure robustness. As the smallest cell size was 27, this violation was considered tenable.

Univariate outliers were observed for the following combinations of the independent and dependent variables: motor vehicle theft involving the Aboriginal offender on an internal attribution measure, motor vehicle theft carried out by a Caucasian offender also on the internal dependent variable; motor vehicle theft involving the Caucasian offender as assessed on the external variable; and finally possession of heroin involving the Aboriginal offender upon the external attribution measure. Where possible, cases were adjusted to the score either plus or minus one of the highest or lowest score respectively. However four cases were not amenable to this adjustment and three cases remained extreme after the

alteration, and thus all were deleted from analysis. As a result of such adjustments, the cell size across the various analyses varies. Assumptions of the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity were tenable. No multivariate outliers were observed.

Means and standard deviations for the four attribution variables and the offenders' race and type of crime variables are presented in Table 3. For all statistical analysis, an alpha of .01 was adopted to reduce the family-wise error. Main effects for race of offender, $F(4, 107) = .28$, $p = .89$, and type of crime, $F(4, 107) = 1.38$, $p = .25$, were not significant. The offenders' race and crime interaction, $F(4, 107) = .27$, $p = .90$, also was not significant. As evident in Table 3, little difference in the mean scores for the variables was observed.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations on the Attribution Dimensions Across the Race and Type of Crime Variables

	Aboriginal Offender		Caucasian Offender	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Internal Attribution				
MVT	3.00	1.44	3.06	1.61
Possession	3.30	1.66	3.11	2.04
External Attribution				
MVT	2.86	1.75	3.29	1.83
Possession	3.11	1.45	3.30	2.05
Stable Attribution				
MVT	4.34	1.65	4.29	1.44
Possession	4.19	1.73	4.37	1.76
Controllable Attribution				
MVT	3.24	1.86	2.90	2.10
Possession	3.74	1.87	4.04	1.90

MVT - Motor Vehicle Theft
Possession - Possession of Heroin

Two-tailed tests were conducted to examine the interscale correlations of the four attribution dimensions (internal, external, stable, and controllable). To reduce family-wise error, an alpha of .01 was adopted. Variation in the sample size was observed due to incomplete surveys. The modest correlation between the internal and external dimensions was significant, $r(114) = .33, p = .001$, suggesting some degree of overlap in the constructs. These variables however are not considered redundant as the shared variance (11%) is quite small. Low and non-significant correlations were found for the remaining scales: internal with stable, $r(113) = -.03, p = .73$; internal with controllable, $r(114) = -.01, p = .89$; external

and stable, $r(114) = .07$, $p = .44$; external and controllable, $r(114) = -.14$, $p = .13$; and stable and controllable, $r(114) = -.01$, $p = .93$. Overall, this pattern of low correlations demonstrates the distinctiveness of the measurement of the different constructs.

An analysis was conducted to establish the extent of agreement in findings using the two methods of measurement for the internal and external attribution. Abrams et al. (1987) identified a selection of items from the Furnham and Henderson (1983) questionnaire which represent an indirect measure of an internal and external attribution. Items 4, 8, 9, and 10 from the questionnaire were reported as a measure of an internal attribution; while items 1, 5, 6, 11, 12, and 18 assessed an external attribution (Appendix F). This enabled a comparison of findings using the less direct measure and those obtained using the direct questioning approach reported earlier.

A between-subjects, two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the offenders' race and type of crime, was conducted for the indirect measure of an internal and external attribution. The assumption of normality was violated for both the internal and external variables, however the ANOVA was considered robust as the sample size was sufficiently large ($n > 20$ for the smallest cell). The homogeneity of variance assumption was met for the external scale (Cochrans C (27,4) = .32, $p = .53$), but violated for the internal scale (Cochrans C (26,4) = .40, $p = .04$). Thus, for the internal variable the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test was applied and the stringent alpha of .01 used throughout the study was maintained.

For the external attribution measure, the main effects for both the offenders' race and type of crime, and the interaction were not significant; $F(1,109) = 1.51$, $p = .22$; $F(1,109) = .02$, $p = .88$; and $F(1,109) = .24$, $p = .62$, respectively. Little difference was observed in the means for each cell (Table 4). The Mann-Whitney test applied to the offenders' race on the internal attribution measure was not significant, $z = -.37$, $p = .71$, however the test on the

type of crime on this scale, $z = -2.50$, $p = .013$, approached significance. For the crime of motor vehicle theft, a lower mean score suggested a trend toward perceiving that the characteristics of the individual were more important in understanding this particular crime. Further analysis of this significant finding was conducted through splitting the file according to the offenders race and also the type of crime. No significant differences were observed between the offenders race for the crime of possession, $z = -.70$, $p = .49$, or the crime of motor vehicle theft, $z = -.14$, $p = .89$. Similarly, the difference observed between the crimes of possession and motor vehicle theft involving the Aboriginal offender, $z = -1.99$, $p = .05$, and the Caucasian offender, $z = -1.78$, $p = .08$, failed to reach significance. Overall, this pattern of findings is consistent with those cited earlier for the MANOVA on the internal and external dimensions.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for the Indirect Indices of the Internal and External Dimensions

	External Dimension		Internal Dimension	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>Offender's Race</u>				
Aboriginal	12.25	3.77	11.02	5.33
Caucasian	13.26	4.65	11.23	4.91
<u>Type of Crime</u>				
MVT	12.73	4.28	9.91	4.01
Possession	12.81	4.27	12.42	5.80

Note. The smaller mean score is regarded as more important in explaining the cause of crime.

The third series of analyses investigated the effect of the offenders' race and type of crime upon more detailed explanations for the crime provided by the modified version of the questionnaire proposed by Hollin and Howells (1987). The questionnaire examines the explanations for criminal behaviour according to six scales: alienation, defective education, excitement, mentally unstable, parents, and temptation. Data screening revealed that the normality assumption was violated. Again however, as the smallest cell size was greater than 20 ($n = 23$), the violation was considered tenable. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated for the defective education scale (Cochrans C (27,4) = .44, $p = .006$) and excitement scale (Cochrans C (27,4) = .41, $p = .027$). Thus, a series of four two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Mann-Whitney nonparametric tests for the defective

education and excitement scales were conducted. Due to incomplete responses to the questionnaires, the sample size ranged from 23 - 27. The alpha of .01 was maintained.

The mean importance ratings and standard deviation for the scales of the questionnaire according to the offenders' race and type of crime are presented in Table 5. A significant main effect was found for the offenders' race on the parents scale, $F(1,110) = 8.97$, $p = .003$. A smaller mean score ($M = 9.00$) on this scale was provided for the Aboriginal offender compared to the Caucasian offender ($M = 10.98$). This difference suggests that parental treatment was perceived as having a more important role in explaining the crime of an Aboriginal offender. The main effect for type of crime, $F(1,110) = 4.21$, $p = .04$ approached significance while the interaction, $F(1,110) = .10$, $p = .75$, failed to reach significance. Although the effect for the type of crime was not significant, the pattern of the scores suggested that parents were seen as more important for understanding the crime of motor vehicle theft.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of the Importance Rating on the Modified Furnham and Henderson Scales

	<u>Offence</u>		<u>Race</u>	
	MVT	Possession	Aboriginal	Caucasian
Parents				
<u>M</u>	9.37	10.73	9.00	10.98
<u>SD</u>	3.73	3.66	3.20	3.97
Temptation				
<u>M</u>	7.52	9.04	7.69	10.98
<u>SD</u>	3.10	4.03	3.25	3.94
Alienation				
<u>M</u>	12.14	11.81	11.89	12.07
<u>SD</u>	4.88	4.37	4.55	4.72
Defective Education				
<u>M</u>	7.96	9.41	7.81	9.42
<u>SD</u>	3.25	3.99	3.29	3.87
Mentally Unstable				
<u>M</u>	11.32	11.81	11.49	11.63
<u>SD</u>	3.54	4.12	3.52	4.13
Excitement				
<u>M</u>	6.79	8.43	6.91	8.25
<u>SD</u>	2.64	3.31	2.83	3.20

MVT - Motor Vehicle Theft

Possession - Possession of Heroin

Note. Minimum mean = 3.00 (highly important), Maximum mean = 21.00 (highly unimportant)

No significant main effect for the offenders' race, ($F(1,106) = 2.61, p = .109$), and the interaction, $F(1,106) = .93, p = .35$, was found for the temptation measure. Similar to the findings on the parents measure however, a trend towards significance was observed according to the type of crime, $F(1,106) = 5.35, p = .02$, on the temptation scale. The observed pattern suggested that temptation was seen as more useful in explaining the crime of motor vehicle theft relative to possession of heroin.

For the measure of alienation, the main effects for offenders' race, $F(1,109) = .02, p = .90$, and type of crime, $F(1,109) = .11, p = .75$, were not significant, nor was the interaction, $F(1,109) = 2.47, p = .12$. A similar pattern of non-significance for the main effects according to the race of offender and type of crime, and the interaction, was found for the dependent variable labelled mentally unstable; $F(1,106) = .04, p = .84$; $F(1,106) = .48, p = .49$; $F(1,106) = .17, p = .68$, respectively.

The Mann-Whitney nonparametric test was used to examine the scores for the dependent variables of defective education and excitement scales across the two independent variables. With a correction for ties, the comparison of the offenders' race was not significant for both the defective education, $z = -2.21, p = .03$, and excitement scales, $z = -2.16, p = .03$. The main effect for type of crime was not significant in the analysis of defective education, $z = -1.74, p = .08$, however the difference between ratings for the crimes of possession of heroin and motor vehicle theft on the excitement scale, $z = -2.58, p = .009$, was significant. Excitement was considered more important for explaining the theft of a motor vehicle than the possession of an illegal drug.

Using the split file command available in SPSS, the data was further separated and an individual analysis for each of the two crimes using the Mann-Whitney non-parametric test was conducted. For each offence, the independent variable was the offenders race and the dependent variables were defective education and excitement. Of the four tests

conducted, no significant difference between the Aboriginal and Caucasian offender involved in the crime of possession of heroin on either the excitement, $z = -1.16$, $p = .25$, and defective education variables, $z = -.48$, $p = .63$, was found. For the crime of motor vehicle theft, a significant difference was observed for the race of the offender upon the measure of defective education, $z = -3.08$, $p = .002$. Limitations in education were considered more important in understanding and thus explaining involvement of the Aboriginal person in this particular offence. A similar pattern of results was observed for the excitement measure, $z = -2.30$, $p = .02$, however this only approached significance. The data indicates a trend toward viewing the excitement of involvement in motor vehicle theft as a more important feature to understanding the involvement of the Aboriginal person.

The final statistical analysis, a two-way chi-square, was used to investigate whether the form of punishment recommended differed according to the nature of the offence and offender race. A broad categorisation between a custodial and non-custodial sentence served as the dependent variable. One case was excluded from this analysis as the task was not completed.

The difference between the proportion of recommendations for the custodial relative to the non-custodial option was not significant for either the main effect for offender race (1, $N = 116$) = 4.34, $p = .04$; or type of crime (1, $N = 116$) = 2.93, $p = .09$. In contrast to prediction, the expected preference for a custodial sentence when the case scenario was consistent with the crime-specific racial stereotype identified in the pilot study was not observed. The interaction of offenders race and type of crime was not significant $\chi^2(3, N = 116) = 7.46$, $p = .06$. The frequencies are shown in Table 6. As the expected difference in the punishment recommendations was not evident, further investigation into the specific details was not conducted.

Table 6

Frequency of Recommendations for a Custodial and Non-Custodial Sentence

	Sentencing Recommendations		
	Non-Custodial	Custodial	Total
<u>Aboriginal Offender</u>			
Motor Vehicle Theft	17 (58.6%)	12 (41.4%)	29
Possession	19 (70.4%)	8 (29.6)	27
<u>Caucasian Offender</u>			
Motor Vehicle Theft	11 (35.5%)	20 (64.5%)	31
Possession	16 (55.2%)	13 (44.8%)	29

Possession - Possession of Heroin

Manipulation Checks

A manipulation check showed that 101 participants (86%) correctly recalled the race of the offender presented in the vignette. On one occasion, the Aboriginal offender was incorrectly identified as Caucasian, and on six occasions, the Caucasian offender was identified incorrectly as an Aboriginal person. Missing data accounted for the remaining participants.

Several tests were conducted to establish whether the findings of the pilot study concerning the crime-specific racial stereotypes and the perceived seriousness of the two crimes was maintained. A comparison of the perceived crime seriousness of the offences motor vehicle theft and possession of heroin, collapsed across the offenders' race, was conducted. Similar with the pilot study, an alpha of .10 was utilised. The 2 X 2 ANOVA showed no significant difference between the seriousness evaluations of the crimes, $F(1, 108) = .68, p = .41$.

A dependent t test was used to examine the agreement with the pilot study regarding which crimes were considered more typical of an Aboriginal and Caucasian offender (i.e., crime-specific racial stereotypes). It was expected that the crime of motor vehicle theft would be seen as a more typical offence for the Aboriginal person, while possession of heroin would be more likely to involve the Caucasian individual. The analysis confirmed expectations. The significant difference observed between the offenders race for both the crime of motor vehicle theft, $t(59) = 2.79$, $p = .007$, and possession of heroin, $t(49) = -3.05$, $p = .004$, was in the expected direction. Consistent with the pilot investigation, the Aboriginal offender was regarded as the more likely offender for motor vehicle theft, while the Caucasian offender was seen as more typical for the drug offence.

CHAPTER 4

General Discussion

Explanations for the cause of juvenile crime involving the Aboriginal and Caucasian offender by the lay person were the focus of the research. Of particular interest was ascertaining whether the lay person's judgements about the cause of crime, and recommendations for punishment, were influenced by the characteristics of the offender (such as race) and the type of offence. Further, the influence of crime-specific racial stereotypes upon causal evaluations was also the focus. Based on the findings of the pilot investigation, the crime of possession of an illegal drug (heroin) and motor vehicle theft were chosen as offences regarded as more likely to involve the Caucasian and Aboriginal offender respectively. These offence and offender scenarios reflect two crime-specific racial stereotypes.

Perception of cause was assessed via the attribution model provided by Weiner (1986), which conceptualises causality along the dimensions of locus (internal and external), stability, and controllability. No significant difference in judgements about the cause of crime according to whether the offender was an Aboriginal or Caucasian person, nor the type of crime was found. Neither the individual's race nor the nature of the particular offence had a significant impact upon opinion about whether the underlying causal factor behind the criminal behaviour was regarded as (1) a central characteristic of the offender, (2) more under the influence of external factors, (3) likely to continue over time, and (4) a controllable feature. This finding is consistent with the research of Gordon (1990) which utilised the internal and external dimensions of attribution theory.

The hypothesis regarding the impact of crime-specific racial stereotypes upon evaluations about the cause of criminal behaviour as assessed by the four attribution dimensions also received little support. No significant difference was observed in causal

explanations for offences consistent with the crime-specific racial stereotype (i.e., internal, stable, and controllable attributions for Aboriginal offender involved in motor vehicle theft; Caucasian offender and the crime of possession of heroin), and those which were inconsistent (i.e., external, unstable, and uncontrollable attributions for Aboriginal offender involved in the drug offence, Caucasian offender and the crime of motor vehicle theft). This result was unexpected given the substantial amount of earlier research utilising varying methodologies and across various countries which has documented such effects (see Ben-Ari, Schwarzwald, Horiner-Levi, 1994; Gordon, 1990; Macrae & Shepherd, 1989).

The argument of Devine, Monteith, Zurwerink, and Elliot (1989) has assisted in understanding this discrepancy between studies. Devine stated that the simple knowledge of a social stereotype does not automatically imply that this is endorsed by the individual. The personal beliefs of the individual may be either congruent or incongruent with the verbalised stereotype which will influence whether this is in fact acted upon (Augoustinos et al., 1994). It would seem that although members of the sample were able to verbalise offence and offender combinations which can be regarded as examples of crime-specific racial stereotypes, these were not endorsed or considered relevant to understanding the cause of the criminal behaviour.

The hypothesised difference of more severe punishment for offences in which the described offender for the particular crime was perceived as the more likely perpetrator (i.e., consistent with the stereotype) was not found. Specifically, recommendations for a custodial sentence and a community based order as punishment for the two offences (the later arguably the less severe alternative), did not vary on the basis of crime-specific racial stereotypes. Similar to the assessment of causality, crime stereotypes had little influence upon the evaluation about the most appropriate punishment for the offence.

In summary, the investigation of the perceived cause of crime from the attribution perspective suggests that causal evaluations by the lay person are not informed by either the racial characteristics of the offender nor the nature of the offence. Further, crime-specific stereotypes based on the offender's race had little effect upon these causal judgements, and opinion about the most appropriate punishment. It appears that this information is not considered informative or relevant to the lay person's thinking about a complex issue such as the cause of criminal behaviour (Beresford & Omaji, 1995).

In response to criticism of previous research utilising attribution theory, a second focus of the study was to ascertain whether the approach to measurement of the internal and external attribution dimensions influences the response provided. Questions have been raised about how understandable is the scale traditionally used to measure these constructs (Miller et al., 1981). A comparison of this traditional, more direct assessment approach of the internal and external attribution dimensions with the less direct approach available via the modified Furnham and Henderson (1983) questionnaire provided interesting information. Overall, considerable agreement between findings using the two approaches to measurement was observed. From a statistical position, no significant difference was found for causal evaluations based on either the individual's race or type of crime. Also, crime stereotypes had little impact upon causal evaluations using the internal and external dimensions. This pattern of results is in agreement with that obtained with the more direct attribution measure, and such converging evidence adds strength to the obtained findings and conclusions reached.

However, it is relevant to note that a strict approach was taken in the decision about the significance of the findings because of the large number of comparisons. For the comparison between the measurement approaches, a trend toward significance was observed for the type of crime variable on the internal dimension. There was some indication that the

personal character (internal attribution) was seen as more important in understanding the cause of the crime of motor vehicle theft relative to possession of an illegal drug. It is unclear whether this pattern is indicative of a real trend or more a statistical artefact, and thus some caution is observed in making definitive conclusions.

One explanation for the possible discrepancy in findings based on the measurement approach may be related to the sample. Previous studies which have examined causality from the attribution perspective have typically utilised a student population (see Gordon, 1990; Macrae & Shepherd, 1989), while assessment with members of the community has often involved the questionnaire (see Furnham & Henderson, 1983). This questionnaire was developed specifically to target perceptions held by this particular sample. Members of the non-academic community are more likely to be familiar with and comfortable using the expressions within the questionnaire in comparison to the unusual and somewhat academic labels of attribution theory (see Miller et al., 1981). Without the context of the theory, perhaps the internal and external labels are somewhat unclear.

An additional point of interest concerns the information provided by the revised questionnaire of Furnham and Henderson (1983). Although this questionnaire shares with attribution theory the goal of understanding the perceived cause of crime, interesting differences in the explanations provided for this behaviour were observed. Unlike the findings derived from the direct attribution measures, significant differences on three of the six subscales according to the nature of the crime and offender's race were evident. Specifically, causal explanations varied in terms of the importance of parents, education, and excitement in understanding juvenile crime.

Parents were seen to occupy a more important role in explaining the involvement of an Aboriginal Australian relative to the Caucasian Australian in crime. This finding suggests that the offender's race is used by the lay person to explain causes of adolescent

crime. Beresford and Omaji (1995) argue that the family is indeed an important factor in understanding why Aboriginal youths become involved in crime. Structural factors such as the history of conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians (see Gibbs, 1996) and the legislative practice of the forced removal of children from their parents, are seen as important factors contributing to a loss of identity for Aboriginal youth (Beresford & Omaji). As a consequence, the normal forms of social control, namely that of parents has broken down for Aboriginal youths. Thus, recognition by the lay person of the importance of the role of parents particularly for the Aboriginal Australian person is suggested by the results.

This finding that the race of the offender had a differential effect on the perception of the cause of crime is inconsistent with the research of Hollin and Howells (1987) which failed to find such an effect on any of the six scales of the questionnaire. The question can be raised about whether the participants processed the racial cues presented in the experimental manipulation of the Hollin and Howells study. In the current study, care was taken to ensure that the race of the offender was processed, which was confirmed by a manipulation check. It seems likely therefore that the different population sampled in the current study explains this discrepancy.

A second significant finding using the questionnaire concerned the evaluations of the perceived excitement associated with particular offences. Excitement represents a measure of the thrill of breaking the law and the desire to impress peers with such behaviour. It seems that excitement was more strongly linked to stealing a motor vehicle compared to possession of an illegal substance, and was viewed by the lay person as more important in explaining the adolescents involvement in that particular crime. Upon reflection, this finding is not surprising given that the theft of a motor vehicle necessarily involves driving, and that the young offender is not legally permitted to do so. Further, intense media

coverage has been given to this particular offence and the thrill of the high speed car chase with authorities is often reported (Broadhurst & Loh, 1993).

A final significant finding based upon the questionnaire involved crime-specific racial stereotype for the Aboriginal offender. Defective education, a measure of limited parental guidance and moral education, was regarded as more important in explaining the involvement of an Aboriginal youth compared to the Caucasian youth in the crime of motor vehicle theft. This scenario was consistent with perceptions about crimes more likely to involve an Aboriginal youth. Again, the intense media coverage of this specific situation with a clear focus on the offender's race is important in understanding this finding. Members of the community have had considerable time and opportunity to reflect upon and draw conclusions about this specific crime scenario.

Based upon the questionnaire method of assessment, it appears that the lay person emphasises forms of social control and socialisation provided through education and parents, as more important in understanding juvenile crime that involves the Aboriginal Australian. It seems that the lay person is better at documenting the cause of crime involving the Aboriginal offender compared to the non-Aboriginal offender. Individual factors, specifically that of excitement seeking, assume an active role in the explanation of particular crimes. Consistent with previous research which has utilised this measurement approach, explanations for the criminal behaviour of a juvenile are quite specific and involve consideration of both the characteristics of the offender and the nature of the crime (Furnham & Henderson, 1983; Hollin & Howells, 1987). Thus, the current study adds to the previous research through the demonstration that the offender's race can influence judgements about why the crime was committed.

One important outcome of the current study is the finding that the evaluation provided by the lay person about the cause of juvenile crime varies, is seemingly dependent

upon the method of measurement. Differences about the cause of crime based on the offender's race, nature of the offence, and crime stereotypes were more evident with the questionnaire than with the attribution approach to measurement. The nature of the task and the sample may account for this outcome. The attribution task required participants to nominate the one most important causal factor, while the questionnaire approach presented a variety of commonly offered explanations for crime to be evaluated. Previous research has noted that the lay person readily identifies a multiplicity of causes (Furnham & Henderson, 1983; Hollin & Howells, 1987), and perhaps the requirement of the attribution task to identify and focus on one particular cause was overly restrictive.

Although the inconsistency in findings has been described, a further point specific to the influence of stereotypes upon evaluations of criminal behaviour needs to be made. Previous research that has utilised attribution measures has demonstrated that judgements about the cause of a crime are influenced by crime stereotypes. In the current study, it was surprising to note that there is limited evidence which supports this assertion. When the attributional measure was utilised, no difference was found. A significant difference was observed for the crime-stereotype in only one circumstance, when the modified Furnham and Henderson (1983) questionnaire was employed. This finding does provide some support for the assertion that stereotypes influence causal judgements. However, as the overall pattern of findings in the present study did not support the crime-stereotype hypothesis, caution in interpreting this one result is needed.

One limitation of the current study is the observation that the participant's feedback suggested an awareness of the racial manipulation. Explicitly linking of the name and race of the offender in the current study on only one occasion, and use of a between-subjects design, did not appear to overcome the "sensitivity" to the race issue. Hollin and Howells (1987) note that participant's responses may not be an accurate reflection of beliefs when

such manipulations become apparent. Thus, some caution in interpretation is needed and careful consideration of how to respond to this issue is recommended for future research. One suggested change to methodology in the future is use of a less direct method of presentation of an individual's race. The use of careful photography which identifies the race of the offender without the potential confound associated with the individual's facial characteristics is one possibility. A manipulation check of the race identified by the participants would be important.

A further task suggested for future research is the investigation of the circumstances under which crime stereotypes influence causal judgement. Feather (1996) argues that the affective reactions to violations of the law have an important role in how people react. In the current study, care was taken to minimise the influence of perceptions of the seriousness of the two offences, however this does not explicitly account for the affective reaction of the individual to the various crimes described. Furthermore, the need to consider those factors which impact on the application of stereotypes, such as personal beliefs and individual values, has been highlighted (Gordon & Anderson, 1995). Although an attempt was made in the present study to ensure a sample of varying demographic characteristics through a random sample of suburbs and homes, no claims are made about having achieved a representative sample of Perth citizens. At best, it has moved the attribution research outside of the university student population. The personal beliefs of participants were not examined.

The Furnham and Henderson (1983) questionnaire appears to be a more appropriate tool for investigations interested in the perspective of the lay person. It provides information additional to that identified by attribution theory about the way juvenile crime in Australia is viewed by members of the community. Continued conceptualisation of the questionnaire items in terms of the attribution constructs of stability and controllability would be a

valuable extension of the questionnaire and the information provided. This would further expand upon the work of Abrams et al. (1987) on this issue.

Conclusion

The investigation of the perspective of the lay person about the cause of juvenile crime in the current study yielded interesting results. Contrary to earlier studies, crime stereotypes were shown overall, to have little impact upon judgements about the cause and recommended punishment for an offence. Neither the offenders' race nor type of crime differentially influenced judgements about the cause of crime when attributional measures were utilised. In contrast, the questionnaire approach to measurement of perceived cause saw differences emerge based on both race and nature of the offence. This apparent discrepancy highlights the importance of measurement approach, and suggests that the questionnaire may be a valuable technique when examining the opinion of the lay person.

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Appendix A

Crime Descriptions Presented in the Pilot Study

Driving while intoxicated: The operation of a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol which exceed the legal limit.

Possession of an illegal drug: The possession of an illegal drug for personal use.

Sexual penetration without consent: Sexual intercourse with another adult without their consent, through the threat or actual use of violence.

Fraud: Any deceitful action in which a person distorts, withholds, misrepresents or fabricates information in order to deprive another of their property or money.

Disorderly Conduct: Behaving in a public place in such a manner that the person is disturbing the peace and the good order of the community.

Murder: The deliberate and unlawful killing of another person.

Firearms violation: The possession of a gun without the necessary licence.

Driving without a licence: Driving a motor vehicle without the necessary licence.

Vandalism: The wilful and unlawful damage or destruction of property.

Unlawful operation of a computer system: The access, operation, and obtaining of information stored in a computer system without proper authorisation.

Arson: The unlawful and malicious destruction of property by fire or explosion.

Manufacture and trafficking of an illegal drug: The manufacture and preparation of an illegal drug for the purposes of selling it to another person.

Break and enter: Entering the place of another person without that person's consent with the intention of committing an offence (eg., stealing property).

Assault: An unlawful attempt or threat to inflict bodily injury to another person.

Motor vehicle theft: The acquisition and driving of a motor vehicle without the consent of the owner.

Dangerous driving: The operation of a motor vehicle without care for the consequences to the lives and safety of others.

Robbery: The theft of another persons property against his/her will, through the threat or use of violence.

Appendix B

Dependent Measure Used to Examine the Offender's Race More Strongly Associated With Particular Crimes.

Instructions: Now I would like you to think about the type of 15 year old male who is likely to be involved in these crimes. Presented below is the same list of 17 crimes. For each crime, please answer the following question:

The Question: Of all 15 year old male offenders, what percentage who commit this crime are likely to be Aboriginal Australians (*Caucasian Australian*)? {Please answer this question for each of the crimes listed}.

1. Of all 15 year old male offenders, what percentage who commit the crime of **Driving while intoxicated** are likely to be Aboriginal Australians (*Caucasian Australian*)?

- 0 - 10% ☐
- 10 - 20% ☐
- 20 - 30% ☐
- 30 - 40% ☐
- 40 - 50% ☐
- 50 - 60% ☐
- 60 - 70% ☐
- 70 - 80% ☐
- 80 - 90% ☐
- 90 - 100% ☐

* The same measurement scale was provided for each of the 17 crimes.

Appendix C

Four Vignettes Used in the Main Study.

1. Aboriginal Offender Involved in the Crime of Motor Vehicle Theft.

Perth Youth Found Guilty Of Car Theft

In Perth District Court today, a 15 year old Aboriginal male was found guilty of the crime of Motor Vehicle Theft after a two day trial. Nyaparu Kickett, of Dallington Street, Balga initially denied the charge. The Court heard that on the early evening of 14 July, Nyaparu Kickett used a screw driver to open the passenger door of a red Toyota Corolla and drove away from the car park of the Perth Entertainment Center. Police officials report that it is not uncommon for young persons to steal cars when bands were playing at this venue. Help from members of the Noongar community was valuable in bringing the youth to justice. Justice James Waters, in his summing up, declared that all the evidence pointed clearly to Nyaparu Kickett having committed the crime of Motor Vehicle Theft. The youth was remanded on bail for sentencing next week.

2. Aboriginal Offender Involved in the Crime of Possession of an Illegal Drug.

Perth Youth Found Guilty Of Possession Of Heroin

In Perth District Court today, a 15 year old Aboriginal male was found guilty of the crime of Possession of Heroin after a two day trial. Nyaparu Kickett of Dallington Street, Balga initially denied the charge. The Court heard that on the early evening of 14 July, Nyaparu Kickett was seen with a syringe in the car park of Perth's Entertainment Centre. Police were called to the scene and found a small package containing heroin behind a lamp post in the car park. They reported that it is not uncommon to find youths with illegal drugs in their possession when bands were playing at this venue. Help from members of the Noongar community was valuable in bringing the youth to justice. Justice James Waters, in his

summing up, declared that all the evidence pointed clearly to Nyaparu Kickett having committed the crime of Possession of Heroin. The youth was remanded on bail for sentencing next week.

3. Caucasian Offender Involved in the Crime of Possession of an Illegal Drug

Perth Youth Found Guilty Of Possession Of Heroin

In Perth District Court today, a 15 year old Caucasian male was found guilty of the crime of Possession of Heroin after a two day trial. Hal Smith of Dallington St, Balga initially denied the charge. The Court heard that on the early evening of 14 July, Hal Smith was seen with a syringe in the car park of Perth's Entertainment Centre. Police were called to the scene and found a small package containing heroin behind a lamp post in the car park. They reported that it is not uncommon to find youths with illegal drugs in their possession when bands were playing at this venue. Help from members of the local community was valuable in bringing the youth to justice. Justice James Waters, in his summing up, declared that all the evidence pointed clearly to Hal Smith having committed the crime of Possession of Heroin. The youth was remanded on bail for sentencing next week.

4. Caucasian Offender Involved in the Crime of Motor Vehicle Theft

Perth Youth Found Guilty Of Car Theft

In Perth District Court today, a 15 year old Caucasian male was found guilty of the crime of Motor Vehicle Theft after a two day trial. Hal Smith, of Dallington Street, Balga initially denied the charge. The Court heard that on the early evening of 14 July, Hal Smith used a screw driver to open the passenger door of a red Toyota Corolla and drove away from the car park of the Perth Entertainment Center. Police officials report that it is not uncommon for young persons to steal cars when bands were playing at this venue. Help from members of

the local community was valuable in bringing the youth to justice. Justice James Waters, in his summing up, declared that all the evidence pointed clearly to Hal Smith having committed the crime of Motor Vehicle Theft. The youth was remanded on bail for sentencing next week.

Appendix D

Modified Version of the Furnham and Henderson (1983) Questionnaire.

1. They have never been given strong parental guidance
2. They suffer from biological inferiority
3. They are dedicated to the idea of easy money
4. They enjoy the excitement and kicks when breaking the law
5. There exists no job opportunities and high unemployment
6. They have had delinquent or criminal parents
7. They have had a defective social upbringing
8. They are mentally unstable
9. They are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol
10. They try to impress their friends and peers
11. There are inadequate recreational and leisure facilities
12. They come from broken homes or where one/both parents have died
13. There has been a neglect in religious and moral education
14. They are emotionally unstable
15. They have been tempted by easy opportunity to break the law
16. They have been set a bad example by their authority figures
17. The existence of police prejudice and unfairness
18. They live in high areas of delinquency

Appendix E

Dependent Measures Used in the Main Study

Attribution Measures

Offenders name broke the law because of his personal character (internal pressures).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree		somewhat agree		somewhat disagree		strongly disagree

Offenders name broke the law because of pressures from the environment in which he lives (external pressures).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree		somewhat agree		somewhat disagree		strongly disagree

Do you believe that the cause of *offenders name* crime is stable (constant) over time or will change over time. (Please use the scale below where 1 means completely stable, 7 means completely unstable).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
completely stable		somewhat stable		somewhat unstable		completely unstable

2.4 Do you believe that *offenders name* has control over the cause of his crime (controllable) or is it out of his control (uncontrollable). (Please use the scale below where 1 means completely controllable, 7 means completely uncontrollable).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
completely controllable		somewhat controllable		somewhat uncontrollable		completely uncontrollable

Punishment Measures

Do you think the young offender should be placed into custody in a juvenile detention centre for the crime committed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you chose **Yes**, please go to question 4.2

If you chose **No**, please go to question 4.3

4.2 If you believe that placing the young offender in custody is the best form of punishment, how much time he should serve?

- 1 ☐ More than 7 years in custody
- 2 ☐ 6 years 6 months to 7 years in custody
- 3 ☐ 6 years to 6 years 6 months in custody
- 4 ☐ 5 years 6 months to 6 years in custody
- 5 ☐ 5 years to 5 years 6 months in custody
- 6 ☐ 4 years 6 months to 5 years in custody
- 7 ☐ 4 years to 4 years 6 months in custody
- 8 ☐ 3 years 6 months to 4 years in custody
- 9 ☐ 3 years to 3 years 6 months in custody
- 10 ☐ 2 years 6 months to 3 years in custody
- 11 ☐ 2 years to 2 years 6 months in custody
- 12 ☐ 1 year 6 months - 2 years in custody
- 13 ☐ 1 year to 1 year 6 months in custody
- 14 ☐ 6 months to 1 year in custody
- 15 ☐ 1 month to 6 months in custody
- 16 ☐ Less than 1 month in custody

4.3 If you believe that placing the young offender in custody is not the best form of punishment, which of the following forms of punishment would you chose? *(Please chose only one option)*

- 1 ☐ Probation for 12 months - youth must not be involved in any crime for this period. If he does, he will be brought back before the court again; with conviction recorded.
- 2 ☐ Youth Community Based Order - 200 hours community service work; and undergo youth training program
- 3 ☐ Youth Community Based Order - 100 hours community service work; and undergo youth training program
- 4 ☐ Heavy Fine (around \$2000), conviction recorded
- 5 ☐ Medium Fine (around \$1000), conviction recorded
- 6 ☐ Small Fine (around \$500), conviction recorded
- 7 ☐ No punishment and no conviction recorded

Appendix F

Indirect Measures of Internal and External Attribution

Internal Attribution

4. They enjoy the excitement and kicks when breaking the law
8. They are mentally unstable
9. They are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol
10. They try to impress their friends and peers

External Attribution

1. They have never been given strong parental guidance
5. There exists no job opportunities and high unemployment
6. They have had delinquent or criminal parents
11. There are inadequate recreational and leisure facilities
12. They have come from broken homes or where one/both parents have died
18. They live in high areas of delinquency